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U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual Volume 14 Handbook 5  
Diplomatic Post Office Handbook

## **14 FAH-5 H-320**

# **SETTING UP MAIL FORWARDING FILES**

*(CT:DPO-3; 01-23-2015)  
(Office of Origin: A/LM)*

## **14 FAH-5 H-321 RESPONSIBILITY FOR DPO MAIL FORWARDING**

*(CT:DPO-3; 01-23-2015)*

- a. "Forwarding service" refers to the procedures for developing and maintaining postal forwarding files and processing "undeliverable as addressed" mail. Diplomatic Post Office (DPO) personnel, acting as United States Postal Service (USPS) agents, are bound by the U.S. Code and must adhere to USPS regulations, policy and guidance on directory service. USPS regulations cannot be waived or mitigated by the Department.
- b. DPOs must maintain a file on personnel receiving mail through their facility. The file must include all personnel *who are entitled to have mail service*, including those scheduled to arrive and permanently departed.
- c. Release of any address information to anyone without the sponsor's written authorization is expressly prohibited *unless the postal officer acts under an order of a Federal court or except in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974*.

## **14 FAH-5 H-322 POSTAL FORWARDING FILES**

### **14 FAH-5 H-322.1 Creating Postal Forwarding Files**

*(CT:DPO-3; 01-23-2015)*

The information used in the Postal Forwarding File, especially personally identifiable information, must be handled in accordance with the Privacy Act and 5 FAM 460:

- (1) Postal forwarding information for sponsors must contain, at a minimum, their name (last, first, and middle initial), section, and mailing address (unit and box number). List the names of the sponsor's family members on the sponsor's record;
- (2) If a sponsor has family members with different last *names*, prepare and file a separate record for each family member. Cross-reference this record with the sponsor's record and maintain it in the same manner. Also, follow

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this procedure for personnel who have changed their name; and

(3) Arrange the directory *by box number*, alphabetically by last name, in one file, if using hard copy records. DPOs may use computer listings or electronic storage instead of hard copy record files, which must be protected in accordance with Department PII policy. Computerized database directories, with search-by-name capacity, do not need to be filed alphabetically. If computers are used for forwarding service, data must be backed up on a regular basis.

## **14 FAH-5 H-322.2 Postal Forwarding Files for Transitioning Personnel**

*(CT:DPO-3; 01-23-2015)*

- a. Postal directory information for transitioning personnel must include the date departed, purge date, forwarding address, and a projected arrival date at the new address. *Personnel being separated from the Department of State ("transitioning personnel") should not provide a separation or transfer point as a forwarding address. DPO may, however, forward mail for transiting State personnel to the Department's Employee Services Center (HR/ESC).*
- b. When the DPO no longer services the sponsor, update the directory record for destruction in 12 months. For example, if a sponsor departs in July 2009, code the directory file for destruction in August 2010.
- c. Post changes and updated information daily. During the first workweek of each month, screen the directory file and remove and destroy all expired records.

## **14 FAH-5 H-322.3 Change of Address Online for DPO and Military Postal Service (APO/FPO) Posts**

*(CT:DPO-3; 01-23-2015)*

- a. *A/LM/PMP/DPM has partnered with the United States Postal Service (USPS) and Military Postal Service (APO/FPO) to provide Diplomatic Post Office (DPO) customers with the ability to change their addresses via the USPS website at the time of transfer and for temporary address changes, e.g., while on home leave. This service allows the USPS system to intercept letter-mail automatically when it reaches the first processing and distribution center, which reduces manual processing by post mailroom employees. USPS will also make changes available to commercial clients, e.g., banks and insurers, so they can update their systems. Please Note that the USPS does not automatically redirect parcels, domestically or abroad. Thus, customers must advise family, friends and vendors of their new addresses to prevent parcels from being returned to sender. For more information and to access the actual form, go to the USPS website and select "Change of Address."*

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- b. The inclusion of DPO/APO/FPO addresses in the USPS internet change of address (ICOA) database will allow authorized employees to request changes using the USPS website at any time. This process requires customers to use their credit or debit cards to verify their identity and address through the institution that issued their card. A minimal verification fee is charged. ICOA subsequently updates the Postal Automated Redirect System (PARS) to intercept mail at the first USPS Processing and Distribution Center system, and redirects mail to the current address on file.*
- c. Completing the form: The first thing you will be asked is if your move is permanent or temporary. The date cannot be more than 30 days in the past or more than 3 months in the future. It takes from 7-10 business days for mail to be forwarded. If your move is temporary, e.g., home leave or ordered departure, he or she will be asked to name a date on which the mail should cease being forwarded to another address. You will also have to define, for the post office, how many people will be making the move. If you are the only one moving, it is called an "Individual" move. If a family is moving and everyone is using the same last name then it is a "Family" move.*
- d. After submitting the form, the mail will automatically be forwarded for 12 months if "Permanent" is selected at the time the COA request is submitted. If a "Temporary" COA request, mail will be forwarded for up to 6 months. When that period of time is over, you can request a 6-month extension. The maximum mail can be forwarded to the new address is a year. The minimum time a temporary COA request may be submitted for is 15 days. For more information and to access the actual form, go to the USPS website and select "Change of Address."*

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